

LETTERS TO CHRIS KRAUS

O 1 'KISS ME,'
'FUCK ME,'
OR
'RAPE ME'

D.E. MACHINA



I want everything I now love, everything I could imagine holding onto in this world, to be debased, and thus commodified, as when everything is commodified there is nothing left to lose. (S. Danger)

The destructive character lives from the feeling, not that life is worth living, but that suicide is not worth the trouble. (W. Benjamin)

i.

You said there is no way to destroy this world so long as we believe anything can be saved.

We baptize ourselves with complete contempt for every structure that subjectivates, i.e., we hate the violence of patriarchal gestures, the male gaze, every gendered subjectivity we come across.

We condemn even the most consensual sex for being the gendered event it is. Regardless of how seductive each little object might be, our focus remains the narrative, the totality of social relations: constitutive lack.

We pray for the moment that this absence is no longer felt, when the symptom is an anachronism.

The post-messianic.

ii.

Why is American civil life, whether regressive or expansive, predicated on Black death? Why are Black folk the indispensable sacrificial lamb vital to its sustenance? (F. Wilderson, III)

There is a kind of pressure in humans to take whatever is most beloved by them and smash it. Religion calls the pressure piety and the smashed thing a sacrifice to [G-d]. Prophets question these names. (A. Carson)

Death, smashing: sacred in both cases—but is the offering hated, or loved? The need for sacrifice in the wake of living, or, the eternal return of being-into-nothingness...

[T]His world is predicated on the absence of the sacred (a lack, or maybe the intentional destruction thereof). The axiom of violence informs [t]his exclusion of the other, the nakedness of bare life—a sacrifice, if you will. His relationship to capital (i.e. a fake god) is predicated upon a certain primary accumulation or destruction of excess, achieved through sacrifice. We can mark as opposites here *his* god(s) and some *true* G-d, communism and all its sacraments. Throwing beautiful boys off the tops of pyramids is no different from social death; the panopticon is continuous with a spectrum of oppressions of visibility, a violent framing of the body by the gaze.

This violent act [sacrifice] puts an end to previous (semiotic, presymbolic) violence, and by focusing violence on a victim, displaces it onto the symbolic order at the very moment this order is being founded. Sacrifice sets up the symbol and the symbolic order at the same time, and this 'first' symbol, the victim of a murder, merely represents the structural violence of language's irruption as murder of soma, the transformation of the body, the captation of drives. (J. Kristeva)

We think of the doctors who perform clitoridectomies on bodies that cannot be easily assigned male or female in the name of charity, gratuitous mutilation of bodies to fit the standard of the binary:

The medical establishment's fascination with its own power to change sex and its drive to rescue parents from their intersex children are so strong that heroic interventions are delivered without regard to the capitalist model that ordinarily governs medical services. (C. Chase)

(That is, we propose that the body of the sacrifice becomes sacred in its moment of destruction—to be policed or destroyed is always testament to a body's centrality—but always in the name of a [fake] god, capital or patriarchy or white supremacy or whatever.)

We might say, then, that the current form(s) of (destroying the) sacred object is for the worship of false gods and irrelevant deities; *I hope you are not assuming that I have ever considered substance (in the Spinozist sense)*

as a monotheistic entity... This world, it might as well be likened to the total arrogation and capture of the characteristics of multitude of incarnate and disincarnate godforms, might as well be an infinite multitude, a handful of which are written about throughout history. For instance, Mammon is a term, derived from the Christian Bible, used to describe material wealth or greed, most often personified as a deity. He/it was a fake god.

Nevertheless: which prophet was not feared by the bureaucrats? (The Christian holiday the *Massacre of the Innocents* celebrates the accidental murder of thousands of children by King Herod when all he really wanted to do was to kill Jesus.) Those false worshippers were the ones who inflicted the stigmata, after all; social death inaugurates the return of the repressed; sacrifice, the eternal return.

iii.

Perhaps our argument should be made unambiguous: my body becomes female because you construct my body as female. Becoming-woman is neither fact nor biological destiny, but a process occurring with every corporalization of power.

The most ridiculous question a woman can ask a man is, 'why did you rape me?' How does one account for the gratuitous? The man is at a disadvantage: 'I raped you because you are a woman; you are a woman because I raped you.' Here is the tautology at the heart of the patriarchal experience.

Gender is introduced onto her body through the non-development of her ego and her definition only in-relation-to—not *something* unto herself. That is, the moments of pregnancy and birth are constructed as *essential* to a particular being because of a need to control reproduction.

The materialist reduction of the gender distinction to 'female' 'reproductive capacity' and the continental prioritization of feminine silence and absence in a phallogocentric economy are two sides to the same coin. This is the Cartesian dualism, which we refuse, along with the compulsion to

emphasize one or the other. The biological is constructed as much as the symbolic, our analysis is not meant to reinforce, but to be part of a project of ruthless critique.

iv.

We refuse the notion of any positive feminist subject, rather, we position ourselves against *men*. Thus, a non-subject, the not-man: let us utilize “men” to refer to the universally signified Subject, “not-men” to designate the symbolic (i.e., socially marked) position of the apparent situation of body that may allow for pregnancy—but more so, ontological lack itself.

When Irigaray speaks of a multiplicity of female pleasure, we could interpret this as a political project of denying a reduction to *one* (ignoring her emphasis on ‘female biology,’ lips and organs).

It is a sort of universe in expansion for which no limits could be fixed and which for all that, would not be incoherency. (L. Irigaray)

Against any reduction to fixed identity, she says ‘they’, never ‘she.’

‘Identity’ itself is never fully constituted; in fact, since identification is not reducible to identity, it is important to consider the incommensurability or gap between them. It does not follow that the failure of identity to achieve complete determination undermines the social movements at issue; on the contrary, that incompleteness is essential to the project of hegemony itself. No social movement can, in fact, enjoy its status as an open-ended, democratic political articulation without presuming and operationalizing the negativity at the heart of identity. (J. Butler)

Each generation of attempts to destroy patriarchy was reduced to a specific group represented by this word “women”: first the aristocratic women could go to school or work or ride a bicycle, then the bourgeois white women could get divorces and fuck whichever man they wanted, then post-graduate women could kiss other women at parties and wear

short skirts. This is a political trajectory of recuperation, marked by a reaffirmation of privilege.

We would rather speak a language that deploys as referent the group we position ourselves against (perhaps simultaneously foreclosing on the inclusion of certain bodies within this category, ‘men’), letting them keep their stupid symbolic bedrock of the *phallus*. The articulation of the group “Women” is always a total failure, is always-already undermined. Both historically and linguistically, it excludes positions we could name subaltern, or part-of-no-part, to this positive term.

But, the non-part has a history as well. Not a single history, but histories that are not those of bourgeois white women. The colonialism of linguistics has the same violent history as any other imperialism:

Dat man ober dar say dat womin needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted ober ditches, and to hab de best place everywhar. Nobody eber helps me into carriages, or ober mud-puddles, or gibs me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! (S. Truth)

Is it more fucked up that Frances Gage and Susan B. Anthony transcribe her like this, or is it more fucked up that our (self-)educated asses think that the tradition of ur-text makes her sound parodied? *Is poetry possible after Auschwitz?*

We would never be so arrogant to propose that the speech act of ‘not-men’ means anything but an abrogation of position, a theoretical doxa which comforts us against the essentialism and claims to universality of Jacobinism, orthodox Marxism, even feminism—all these suggestions of a *unity* of political actors. Not-men cannot be spoken of as *doing* something—anything—or having any unity.

We do not want a unity, nor to speak of political actors; we echo Wittig here:

Our first task, it seems, is to always thoroughly dissociate “women”(the class within which we fight) and “woman,” the myth. For “woman” does

not exist for us: it is only an imaginary formation, while "women" is the product of a social relationship. [...] "Woman" is not each one of us, but the political and ideological formation which negates "women" (the product of a relation of exploitation). "Woman" is there to confuse us, to hide the reality "women." In order to be aware of being a class and to become a class we first have to kill the myth of "woman" including its most seductive aspects (I think about Virginia Woolf when she said the first task of a woman writer is to kill "the angel in the house"). (M. Wittig)

v.

Bracha Ettinger posits that the originary, in-between space of subjectivity, of pre-subjectivity, and yet absolutely shared concomitance, is the dual corporeal sharing of a baby in the womb, i.e. the *Matrixial borderspace*. She is fascinated by this intersubjective space, a material intertwining of bodies of hospitality before the Real.

Of course Mommy shares with Baby, the ingested towards the uterus through the umbilical cord to the belly button. But we would argue that she is only nourishing a parasite.

“But if the female imaginary happened to unfold, if it happened to come into play other than as pieces, scraps, deprived of their assemblage, would it present itself for all that as *a* universe? Would it indeed be volume rather than surface? No. Unless a female imaginary is taken to mean, once again, the prerogative of the maternal over the female. This possession of its valuable product, and competing with man in his esteem for surplus. [...] Mythology long ago assigned this role to her in which she is allowed a certain social power as long as she is reduced, with her own complicity, to sexual impotence.” (L. Irigaray)

The violent process of mechanizing the body (i.e., processes of gender) creates a space where this ostensibly pure space of shared intersubjectivity is without a doubt void of anything interesting, beautiful, or special; we find suspect even the conception that a more primitive iteration of the baby-machine was decent and only now perverted by domination. Any

naturalist revindication of childbearing or the 'specific' female body is ideologically suspect at best.

(This body feels rotted through.)

vi.

Then we have the ever-fascinated men, convinced that their own unsure failures at romance or fucking indicate a universal scandalous incomprehensibility to the female body. (Oh, he just can't get it up!)

Any becomings, being minoritarian, always pass through a becoming-woman. (G. Deleuze & F. Guattari)

or,

For if production can only produce objects or real signs, and thereby obtain some power; seduction, by producing only illusions, obtains all powers, including the power to return production and reality to their fundamental illusion. (J. Baudrillard)

or, even those catering to the tastes of our post-structuralist idols:

Can it be that in the West, in our time, the female body has been constructed not only as a lack or absence but with more complexity, as a leaking, uncontrollable, seeping liquid; as formless flow; as viscosity, entrapping, secreting; as lacking not so much or simply the phallus but self-containment—not a cracked or porous vessel, like a leaking ship, but a formlessness that engulfs all form, a disorder that threatens all order? (E. Grosz)

or, even a vulgar reading of the critical race theorists:

What does it mean to be positioned not as a positive term in a counterhegemonic struggle, i.e. as a worker, but to be positioned in excess of hegemony, to be a catalyst which disarticulates the very rubric

of hegemony, to be a scandal to its assumptive, foundational logic, to threaten its discursive integrity? (F. Wilderson, III)

(*Her* body is marked for annihilation; the whore was the first form of slave.)

Becoming-woman as door to imaginary party, line of flight without linearity; corporeality as destruction of the symbolic (by way of access to the signifying economy, i.e., the phallus); the seductress' power of manipulation of image as subversion of the phallogocentric economy.

That the destructive aspects of patriarchal power and the abjection that they (the *excrement*: shit, vomit, &c.) produce can be comprehended as fundamentally ambiguous and disassembling, the (not-)body as inherently disruptive, is based on an understanding of the sacrificed as sacred. The feeling of hysteria that comes from a non-place in the symbolic order (Lacan's understanding of the female is that she is fundamentally hysterical because of this exclusion; 'female' is constructed by patriarchy and patriarchy constructs this discursive exclusion, so the female is always inherently hysterical) is not a scandal, it is mere non-inclusion for the integrity of a civil society that is inherently exclusive, predicated on certain exclusions. Proposals that posit this stupid body as inherently revolutionary suggest a formal positivism at the heart of the class 'women'—an affirmation which we reject.

vii.

The role is the self-caricature which we carry about with us everywhere, and which brings us everywhere face to face with an absence. An absence, though, which is structured, dressed up, prettified. (R. Vaneigem)

The matrices of civil society are predicated on the foundational exclusion of an 'other' grammar. We claim as political project our (true) theological imperative to negate this position of exclusion through the abolition of the Other (i.e. the structure of discourse that defines their status as 'other'), namely through the destruction of civil society and hence the

fabric of exclusion, but also, through self-abolition. Like anything else, it is not something we can propose to enact, or be the vanguard of, but this inevitably will occur: to breach the limits of radical alterity, to abolish the limit conditions allowing for exclusion, to negate all predicates—the divine, or, the Messiah.

Thus, the gender strike, or, a catalog of our failures:

For instance, to abolish those positionalities structured around a reproductive function: a self-annihilating nothingness as the disruption, excision, and negation of the process of reproduction (of the reproduction of the subject, reproduction of value, reproduction of production), publicity and swagger, the gaze, and appearance. An *inhuman* strike, for instance the intentional failure and refusal to save another's life, to not bring into the world a new life (against the Matrixial borderspace).

For instance, explaining a distinct lack of responsiveness to a gang rape:

«*Fuck, Manu, how could you do it?*»

«I don't give a shit about their scummy dicks. I've had others. Fuck them all, I say. If you park in the projects, you empty your car 'cause someone's gonna break in. I leave nothing precious in my cunt for those jerks. It's just a bit of cock. We're just girls.» (Baise-Moi)

Going on strike against the coordinates of the body's subjectivation by Manu (going on strike against her positionality as subject of patriarchal violence), a calm and simple strike (not moving, not speaking) amidst the violence of rape, a strike against one's positionality and supposed roles in this world (that is, as an always-already rapeable body).

For instance, when watching her suck that man's cock, I felt empathy: when you look up while licking that little nook in the head of a penis to convince him you really are into it. We learned, and next time, I bite it.

For instance, the third wave proposal: rather than merely fulfill—or even disavow—the stupid expectations, we exceed them, by engulfing

ourselves in it, wearing high heels and fucking, refusing all these ‘radical feminist’ pretensions of destroying patriarchy by not engaging with it. The logical conclusion: ‘gender strike,’ then, attempted through the total (dis) embodiment of the most violent gendering processes: a performance of gender merging ultra-femininity with ultra-masculinity undermines the affirmation of every notion of gender.

Here, Lacan’s statement makes sense: *woman is the phallus*. Pure semblance, of power, of vulnerability, of artifice. We perform the façade perfectly.

More than a radically detached anti-social egoist nihilism: being the Other, *and* destroying the Other, by destroying oneself as woman qua access to the Other—destroying oneself as desired Object, but also, destroying the mechanism that structures desire itself. To embody pure semblance (i.e., nothing) is to provoke the boring tangibility of everything else, almost proposing a sex-object, i.e., woman, as the objectifying sex, i.e., man.

Butlerian genderfucking: she suggests that there is something interesting in the internal contradictions that emerge in the performance of gender, that playing with these signs will expose the carnality of their constructedness and may somehow subvert the structure. Alas, this is liberalism! Gendered bodies are not created solely on the basis of performance; gender is not an issue of the self. The body is constructed socially, is structurally determined. (The shameful materialism that structures this piece finally emerges!) The suggestion of personal performative resistance reveals the content beneath the surface: a crude individualism constructed by liberal capitalism, the prioritization of these stupid fleshsacks.

viii.

Let’s try again:

In Italy, radical feminism was an embryonic form of human strike. “No more mothers, women and girls, let’s destroy the families!” was an invitation to the gesture of breaking the expected chain of events, to release the compacted potentialities. It was a blow to fucked up love affairs, to

ordinary prostitution. It was a call to the overcoming of the couple as elementary unit in the management of alienation. A call for complicity, then. (Tiqqun)

The Catholic who starved herself to death:

To empty ourselves of the world. To take the form of a slave. To reduce ourselves to the point we occupy in space and time—that is to say, to nothing. (S. Weil)

Perhaps then, she proposes, the void can become G-d.

Gender strike, then: merely a perverse catholicism, a becoming-divine.

ix.

Life risks itself; the project of destiny is realized. What was only a dream figure becomes myth. And living myth, which intellectual dust only knows as dead and sees as the touching error of ignorance, the myth-lie represents destiny and becomes being. (G. Bataille)

Bataille's taste of praxis, for a brief failed period, through the *Acephale* secret society: sacrifice to create myth, myth to engender *being*.

Direct Action as a means of escaping fate. As every act of terrorism must be, the raid on the Social Institute was “exemplary”: a metaphor exploding from the margins onto a much larger screen. Yet Meinhof herself still lived within the confines of discursive language. It was not ‘til six years later, when she was incarcerated in a maximum security cell in Stammheim Prison, that she herself became “exemplary.” That she became an Alien, i.e., someone who had changed. (C. Kraus)

You demand: one hundred theses on anti-male violence are written out and then practiced. Thus far, perhaps random anti-male violence through the use of a tazer or extendable baton are potential theses which serve to not only interpret the world in various ways, but to change it. Or, perhaps:

everything is burned or looted, the commodity form disappears; sacrifice. All individuals—the *individual*—must be effaced.

Sacrifice involves destroying and wasting (“offering to G-d”, for instance) something that is of value to the person performing the sacrifice. Hence, the Biblical examples of Abraham and Isaac, or the calls for burnt offerings of livestock. A sheep is of value to a shepherd because its meat and fleece are valuable. When G-d calls the shepherd to sacrifice the sheep and burn it, the shepherd must give up, or sacrifice, that which is of prior value to him. (Carnamagos)

Ritualized murder is no different. Why is the sacrifice always of the prettiest, the strongest, the smartest, the superlative ____? How one in nine young black men are in prison, ‘surplus population’; how the boys thrown from the tops of pyramids were always the loveliest. Every sacrificed object: absolutely loved, unquestionably dead.

x.

[T]his is my gift to you. Accept it.

*This said, he raised his offering
and threw it down the stairs.*

*On the ground, the sacrificial victim
twisted with pain.*

[...]

*You sat beside the corpse,
with the road-dust still on your face,
your soul scalded by sorrow,
your heart tired of arrows.*

You complained: O Justice! O Faith!

*O, the shamelessness of the brute –
offering me a corpse*

and asking me to accept it! (S. Behbahani)

Men only *appear* to embody the mechanism that structures desire—although their fake god(s) do, i.e., Lacan’s Other. (Obviously, for Lacan,

there is only one deity, but Lacan also naturalized a variety of terrible structures—patriarchy, capitalism, white supremacy, &c.—so fuck him and his [false] god). While the poetics of sacrificing all the men to G-d is indisputable, G-d's mysterious ways make knowledge of fate or redemption impossible. Plus, we don't want to give any satisfaction to men who get off on being strangled.

'But I like being strangled!'

'I know.'

'Are you adding that to the paper?'

'Yes.'

'I feel slightly attacked. Which is okay, but subtle contempt should be brought into play all at once, and not be a tease. Or at least that's how I feel about it.'

'I thought you wanted to be sacrificed, but really, you just want to be put on a pedestal. Put on a pedestal and beautifully mutilated.'

'Absolutely. And you're saying it's stupid. Which is fine. Maybe. No. I don't think so. Maybe. I don't know. It's not a martyr thing. So...'

The unconscious of the writing project has erupted, where masochism reveals itself as its opposite; the male makes clear that his interest in gender strike is mere self-valorization. He proposed sacrifice and male death, or, creating the conditions for the shift in gratuitous violence; really, this only establishes him as our beloved and our becoming as a fact.

Schirmacher: "In your model of seduction, why is vengeance necessary when the pact is broken?"

Baudrillard: First I don't have a model of seduction, it's a form, a dual relation, not a model. Of course it's a pact, not a contract. When you break the pact, one form of challenge and reversibility is revenge. Revenge is a vital acting-out. It preserves the status of the other, maybe in a violent form, in a murder for example. A murder can be a very dualistic act, a pact which allows us to see that there is a deeper complicity in revenge than in indifference. Indifference is a very despoliation of the other. That's our reaction, today, the most frequent reaction to all negative happening is an indifferent response, not revenge.

An assertion of his importance, if even to suggest only that his sacrifice is integral to the emergence of communism or G-d or whatever. By referencing the importance of men, we once again engage in phallogocentrism, to accept the pact, or *game*, between his power and our own along with the masculine epistemological position that constructs this structure, i.e., compulsory heterosexuality.

One must not wage war on man. This is his way of attaining value. Deny in order to affirm. Kill to love. (A. Leclerc)

Sacrifice always establishes the sacred, inevitably trapped within a standstill essentialism, within a regime of positivity without extrication. Our focus is not these irrelevant heathens, not even to expose the castration threat that the female representation carries.

xi.

And this is the abject. Reminded of Chris Kraus's novel *I Love Dick*, a study in the abject, the female—it ends with the reassertion that—despite everything about the abject character she embodies—she disrupts nothing in the phallogocentric economy: the man to whom she spent the entire book writing love letters merely sends her a photocopy of a letter written to her husband.

All revolutionary solidarity, the conjoined-to-death of the secret society insurrectional formation, fails to single-handedly renounce the closed circuit of heroism, or, once again reveals the inability of 'radical thought' to negate everything all at once. One cannot force communism into existence; like G-d or structure, it exists without intentionality or the will of set-up.

Maybe gender strike is an allowance for G-d, but G-d isn't real. This is what Simone Weil learned as she starved herself to death [for G-d]. There's that other thing, about how when we're standing in front of G-d, we'll be stripped of all but our sins for judgment. As though subjectivities, those

material respites of structure, will disappear. And perhaps that's what happens at the most terrible moment of strike, or insurrection.

[...]

The room is spinning and I sort of have a headache because I have just taken this dirty little homemade drug called GBH and snorted a bunch of cocaine. I set down my cigarettes and walk across the room toward a guy... Believe me, when you start you think it will be just this once. You imagine parameters, goal posts, between which you keep a small list of things you will permit; it is really quite small. Things included in the list might be: borrowing a sweater without asking, wearing your mother's rings while she's in the shower, saying I hate you any one of your sisters. You never mean to do any of these things, but you do, and somehow you survive. You feel fine actually. So other items are enlisted: smoking cigarettes on the hill behind your high school, taking your older sister's favorite shirt and leaving it in a boy's dorm room, saying fuck you to your dad. And by the time you've graduated from college you haven't got much left to fear; by now you've done several genuinely despicable things—cheated on a boyfriend with a teacher, taken painkillers before a family reunion, lied to your grandfather about still believing in [G-d]—and here you are today, doing all right. You come to know that no matter what infraction you commit, what indiscretion, what temptation you yield to, you will get over it and you will be fine, you will always be just fine. (in/vision: forge)

[...]

One, two, a million Hegel-pétroleuses; the conditions cannot be forced into place. To abolish the night, negate the conditions of G-d's appearance, compearance, and disappearance—this is the *impossible*. The relation of impotence in the hysteric's discourse, she forever receives an answer inadequate to her sense of lack.

xii.

Of course we hate everything, *G-d abandoned us at the emergence of the barred subject, of primitive accumulation, of the subjugation of other bodies (even the apple, you might say)*. Still we wait, for redemption, through absolution and communion, to enact the death of his god and the coming of G-d's kingdom of heaven on earth.

The extinction of desire (Buddhism)—or detachment—or amor fati—or desire for the absolute good—these all amount to the same: to empty desire, finality of all content, to desire in the void, to desire without any wishes. To detach our desire from all good things and to wait. Experience proves that this waiting is satisfied. It is then we touch the absolute good.
(S. Weil)

I'd prefer not to.

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for C. Diep & S. Danger

LES PÉTROLEUSES WERE THE SEX WORKERS, WITCHES, AND LADY-PROLES OF
THE PARIS COMMUNE WHOSE 'LOVE OF RIOT' BURNT PARIS TO THE GROUND.

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i. premise | ii. female sacrifice | iii. insemination |
iv. not-men | v. the body | vi. the sign | vii. gender
strike | viii. the void | ix. negation | x. male
sacrifice | xi. nihilism | xii. on waiting